



Philip Merryweather
Owner



An Exotic **ANIMAL OASIS** *on Aruba*

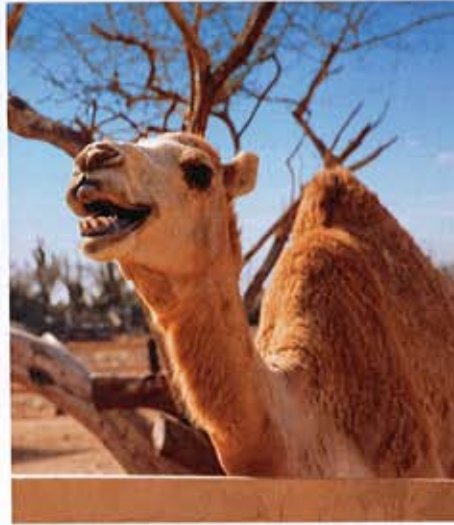
Philip's Animal Garden is the only organization rescuing and rehabilitating exotic animals on Aruba. The non-profit animal sanctuary is built on more than eight acres of land north of the capital of Oranjestad.

Established in 2009, it's home to an assortment of monkeys, peacocks, Aruban rattlesnakes, a small crocodile, a Shetland pony, alpacas, horses, a red kangaroo and baby goats. In their spacious enclosures, spider monkeys swing like circus stars from branches, deer roam freely in a large pen dotted with palm trees, and owls, parrots, macaws and other exotic birds sing all day in their thatch-topped huts. Across a path, donkeys hungrily munch on carrots offered by children visiting the garden.

Many of the animals that are rescued come from former zoos or are deserted and can't be released into the wild, including an orange, black and white *troupial*, a local bird with a broken wing that lives in the garden's rehab area, enjoying the high-quality food and air-conditioning.

With input from the Aruban community and visitors, Philip and his team at the garden strive to provide the best possible care for their animals. Philip originally built all the enclosures himself, from scratch, but he dreams of upgrading the facilities to a world-class animal shelter, complete with veterinary care and round-the-clock staff.

The *Garden* is dedicated to combatting animal mistreatment and to raising awareness about the consequences of abuse and neglect by owners. It also aims to promote the conservation and preservation of animals at risk of extinction.



Photography: Kenneth Thayer

As Aruba's resident animal rescuer, Philip is often called when an animal gets loose. He's tracked a mountain lion on Curaçao, as well as ostriches and lots of Aruban rattlesnakes – an endangered species that's a vital part of the local ecosystem. "Every animal has its role. If there were no rattlesnakes to eat mice, we'd have an infestation within a month or two," says Philip.

His desire to help animals is what convinced him to found the garden in the first place. "You rescue one and you have good intentions, then one thing leads to another," he says.

Philip's Animal Garden is proud to be a sustainable, local business on Aruba. It's a valuable addition to the many tourist attractions Aruba has to offer, and it lets visitors take a break from the beach at one of the most beautifully kept gardens on the island – a tranquil oasis that preserves the local habitat and its flora and fauna.

As a non-profit organization, the garden does not rely on governmental support. All funds raised through ticket sales, tours, theme-days and donations go towards guaranteeing the well-being of the animals, including the safety and cleanliness of their enclosures or habitats, veterinary care and all necessary vaccines, as well as high quality food for each animal's specific dietary requirements.

The *Garden* is located about a five- to seven-minute drive from the high-rise hotel area. The site is 100% accessible by wheelchair, with ramps, allocated areas for disabled visitors and resting places throughout the garden.

Philip's Animal Garden also offers special itineraries and tour packages that include a bag of treats for the rescued animals.

After one visit to the garden, you'll want to come back! ■

For more information about visiting *Philip's Animal Garden*, donating or sponsoring an animal, call: (297) 593-5363 or email: info@philipsanimalgarden.com or consult any hotel concierge.



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